

Minutes
Skateboard Park Advisory Committee
January 17, 2006

Committee Members Present: Keith Strobel, Christian Poules, Matthew Johnston, Dan Hughes, John Carr, Roxanne Thomas, Scott Shinn

Guests: Hans Bjordahl, Roger Cox, Dan Barnett, Kate Martin, Pam David, Carl Jorgenson, Robert Zimmer, Dane Burke, Daniel Peterson, Roger Cox

Staff: Susan Golub

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Public Comment – Pre-Meeting

Hans Bjordahl

A Lower Woodland skatepark neighbor, Hans Bjordahl, spoke in favor of alternatives to the current skatepark site, including the original Chips Site and the Aurora Triangle site. Hans explained that the current site does not create conditions for the skatepark to succeed. Mr. Bjordahl emphasized that the neighborhood is not anti-skateboarding, just against this site, and that it will have too many impacts on the neighborhood. He explained that there was no neighborhood involvement due to the previous understanding that the skatepark would be built at the Chips Site, and that the neighborhood should work with the skateboarding community to locate the skatepark elsewhere.

Roger Cox

Mr. Cox spoke to promote <http://www.badgenepool.com>, a web site going live next month to support the riding community, including BMX, skateboarding and snowboarding. The site will be clearinghouse for monitoring the progress of building parks and its promoters would like to bring kids into the park design/build process.

Dan Barnett

Mr. Barnett spoke regarding bikes in skateparks, noting that it would be a bad idea to allow this, and cited park damage from bikes at the Marginal Way skatepark, where bikes aren't allowed anyway, and noted that overcrowding in skateparks will occur if bike use is allowed.

Regarding the current Lower Woodland skatepark location, Dan asked: what are the real issues here? He also noted that adjacent traffic noise will be louder than skatepark noise.

Kate Martin

Regarding bikes in skateparks, Ms. Martin noted that the position of Parents for Skateparks on this issue is that bikes should not be allowed in skateparks, but that the organization supports development of bike facilities in public parks.

Regarding the current Lower Woodland skatepark location, Ms. Martin sent a letter to the Mayor noting that the nearest house is 178 feet from the edge of the proposed bowl in the location specified by the community design charette site plan, that the street skating would be even further away, and that the area is not currently used as a sports warm-up area.

Regarding the community design charette for the Lower Woodland site, Ms. Martin reviewed a map of the proposed site plan, which includes a jogger's path next to the BMX area, and drop-off loop at the end of the existing tennis court parking area, additional parking, a flat skate plaza, and concrete terrain for BMX. SPAC chair, Matt Johnston, thanked Ms. Martin for her efforts in this area.

Pam David

Regarding the Lower Woodland skatepark location, Ms. David urged Parks not to reconsider the original Chips Site for reasons of safety. Pam also noted that she attended the first design meeting, but did not receive notice for the second meeting, and that Gregg's Greenlake Cycle, a local skateboarding vendor, didn't either. This is bad public outreach.

Carl Jorgensen

Mr. Jorgensen spoke about the rich history of skateboarding in the Wallingford and Green Lake areas. He stated that the Lower Woodland site is a good location for reasons of bus access, proximity to other great skateboarding venues, and good integration with existing BMX facilities.

Updates

Ballard Opening Day Ceremony

John has been asked to speak on behalf of skateboarders at the ceremony.

Additional comments were offered about the need for rules signage, garbage cans and spectator seating at the bowl. Matt will follow up on this with a letter to Erin Devoto on behalf of the SPAC.

Skatepark Resolution

The City Council will vote on the skatepark planning initiative sponsored by Councilmember Della in February.

Lower Woodland Skatepark Design Meeting #2 Recap

Mr. Hughes reported that input was provided to Wally Holiday regarding the three draft designs. Additional discussion occurred regarding the percentage of street and vert features. There were four general areas in Wally's design: two vert areas, one classic street area, and a fusion reservoir/ditch area.

The Public Hearing with the Board of Park Commissioners regarding the skatepark location will occur on January 26.

SeaSk8

Ms. Golub reported that a consultant has been selected to facilitate the relocation site assessment process, and that results will be available in mid-February.

SPAC Chair Election

Mr. Johnston suggested a process whereby the SPAC Chair will be rotated on an annual basis with no repeats. Additionally, he suggested that SPAC members who miss three meetings should lose their seat on the SPAC. On this latter point, no consensus was reached. The March meeting will be the end of

Matt's term as SPAC chair, and an election will occur at the February meeting. Scott Shinn nominated John Carr and Micah Shapiro as potential SPAC Chairs.

BMX in Skateparks

Matt Johnston proposed a general ban on bikes in Seattle skateparks, with exceptions to occur on a park by park basis moving forward.

John Carr noted that the comprehensive skatepark planning initiative will guide the long term process, that compromises for bikes can be determined on a case by case basis, and that there is broad support for a ban on bikes among members of the skateboarding community. Establishment of a basic rule for bikes will set a good precedent.

Scott Shinn supported the presumption of "no bikes" in skateparks and noted that such a policy should also be within the scope of the forthcoming Task Force to be established by the planning initiative. Additionally, he noted that BMX deserves public space, and that facilities to serve this sport should also be developed by Parks in the future.

Mr. Shinn moved the previous question on this issue and Matt Johnston called for the vote. All were in favor of a general ban on bikes in Seattle skateparks.

John Carr will draft and circulate the proposal to be submitted by the SPAC to Parks.

Feature Discussion – Street versus Transition

Prior to the meeting, Skaters for Public Skateparks submitted a written position on this issue, including a supporting rationale and skate feature-specific feedback for the Lower Woodland skatepark that was contained in a series of diagrams. SPS recommends that skateparks maintain a 60/40 Street to Transition ratio due to the popularity of the street skating style with the fundamental understanding that most skaters will enjoy access to a wide variety of terrain types.

Scott Shinn argued that the cost of skate features should be considered in addition to the number of concurrent users, and that a general 80/20 street to transition split on square footage, with a 50/50 split on cost would be equitable. Transition costs more than street per square foot, and younger skaters prefer street style to transition style skating. Skateparks should provide enough square footage for street in order to serve the needs of kids.

John Carr argued that the definition of street and transition are problematic, and that many skatepark features are difficult to categorize into either type. A local example of fusion terrain is the Renton skatepark. Becoming locked into a strict definition of skate terrain will tie the hands of skatepark designers and builders. An example is the proposed reservoir feature for the Lower Woodland skatepark. In addition to specific terrain types, it is also important to consider features for a variety of skill levels.

Matt Johnston argued that the goal of this exercise is to determine a fair starting point for skatepark design, and that everyone wants an equitable balance of terrain. In general, demographic data for the skatepark user base is available for consideration when designing and building.

Keith Strobel supported the general idea of having a broad definition for terrain balance in Seattle skateparks, and noted that a policy would help relieve pressure for individual park users to lobby for specific types of terrain. At the citywide level, he noted that a general formula would be helpful rather

than a hard and fast rule. Regarding Lower Woodland and other quadrant skateparks, he supported a mix of both types of terrain, and noted that smaller skatespots could be devoted to one or the other.

Dan Hughes argued that a problem with a straight percentage of street to transition is that there are many types of fusion features, and that a dichotomous model does not capture this aspect of skatepark design. A flyout is one example of fusion terrain.

Roxanne Thomas noted that her 13 year-old skates both types of terrain, although many of his friends prefer street. She argued that street and transition in one location would make it easier for kids without readily available transportation to try both styles.

John Carr reiterated that the citywide plan could consider a geographically equitable distribution of both types of terrain.

Matt Johnston noted that street terrain requires a larger footprint than transition terrain to be successful, but that transition requires more actual square feet of concrete than its footprint due to the transition and vertical components.

Public Comment – Post-Meeting

Robert Zimmer

Regarding street and transition, Mr. Zimmer argued that dedicated parks are not as good as parks with a mix of terrain, and that street skaters can make use of a variety of terrain, including skateable art. Simple, well-built features are great for beginners as well as experienced skaters. Separate sites for each type of skating are not desirable. Street skating can also include quarterpipes and banks, which can also be categorized as transition. Mr. Zimmer agreed that street requires a greater footprint, and noted that adequate space and good flow are prerequisites for high-quality street skateparks.

Carl Jorgensen

Mr. Jorgensen argued that it is easy to delineate between street and transition, and that walls with curves are transition. Everything else is street. Separate street and transition sessions are preferred. The Burnside skatepark is an example of fusion terrain. It is difficult to maintain separation with fusion terrain once the skatepark becomes too crowded.

Kate Martin

Ms. Martin suggested having a SPAC meeting on a Sunday night with pizza sometime, to encourage kids to participate. She argued that this would be a more kid-friendly time than a weeknight. She also supported separate but adjacent transition and street sessions, like at the temporary Ballard skatepark, with additional beginner/skill-building separation when possible.

Dane Burke

Mr. Burke concurred with Kate Martin on beginner-level separation, and Carl Jorgensen on street/transition separation. Mr. Burke recalled his own experiences learning street and then progressing to transition on Bainbridge Island, and noted that many of his friends continued to practice street style exclusively. He argued that adjacent street features at the local skatepark would've provided opportunities for everyone to session together. Both types of terrain at all skate parks should be provided when possible.

Dan Barnett

Regarding the Ballard Commons, Dan Barnett noted a need for another garbage can in the SW corner of the bowl area and additional spectator benches.

Regarding a Seattle design/build exception for skateparks, Dan noted that the City Council is supportive of this idea and that follow-up dialogue should be opened by the SPAC.

Regarding street to transition ratios, Mr. Barnett argued that they are too absolute except in the case of large parks because smaller skatespots won't always be large enough to accommodate both styles while maintaining quality, and concurred that the skatepark planning initiative should address this issue within its scope.

Daniel Peterson

Regarding badgenepool.com, Daniel Peterson noted that the web site will represent many different styles of sports including skateboarding, BMX, motocross and snowboarding that would benefit from park features that do not occur "naturally" within the urban landscape or within other types of environments. In particular, skateparks should contain features that promote good flow and a variety of styles. Skatepark-specific features might involve banks at the ends of long street lines to facilitate turnarounds, and fusion terrain that is arranged to facilitate repeatable lines and loops.

Roger Cox

Regarding badgenepool.com, Roger Cox identified himself as the Project Coordinator and noted a goal of the web site is to improve communication among advocates, vendors and park designers from a variety of sports.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.